

# Aileu Food Security and Nutrition Project

## EAST TIMOR



## Project Brief

## Best Western and World Vision are helping our neighbours to become food secure and reduce child malnutrition rates

Although a small country, East Timor is one of the world's poorest nations, ranking 158th out of 179 countries in the Human Development Index (United Nations Development Program). It places it as the poorest country in Asia, and the poorest country outside Africa. The country suffers from high-level chronic food insecurity, and malnutrition and poor health services are of concern. By supporting this project, you will help the community of Aileu district have access to food all year round, and reduce the prevalence of malnutrition.

### The Background

Many East Timorese suffer high-level chronic household food insecurity and child malnutrition. At a global level, the country was recently ranked 18.4 (serious) on the Global Hunger Index, (GHI),<sup>1</sup> significantly higher than other countries within the East Asian region. It has severe localised food insecurity and requires external food assistance.

Although the national food supply is improving, food security at a household level remains critical. In a normal agricultural year up to 90% of East Timorese experience food shortage for at least one month.<sup>2</sup> Around two thirds of the rural population experience food shortage for about four months each year (November to February).

The issue of food insecurity is complex and has several underlying causes, including:

- Climate change (more intensive and erratic rainfall but shorter rainy seasons are predicted).
- Decreasing soil fertility due to slash and burn practices (shifting agriculture) and logging.
- Drought and lack of water for plants.
- Poor or inappropriate agricultural practices.
- Lack of government ability to support farmers (lack of staff, expertise and facilities).

<sup>1</sup> GHI is a multi-dimensional approach measuring hunger and malnutrition.

<sup>2</sup> Oxfam and MAFF (2004) Study on lessons learned in implementing community level agriculture and natural resource management projects in Timor-Leste Final Report.



- Dependency or free hand-out mentality amongst farmers, and lack of market-orientation.<sup>3</sup>

Food insecurity, in turn, is causal to maternal and child malnutrition. This is exacerbated by other factors such as poverty, lack of access to quality health services, cultural practices, and poor education. It is estimated that 48% of East Timorese children under 5 are underweight.<sup>4</sup>

Poor health and nutrition is a significant impediment to the wellbeing of the project's targeted communities. Malnutrition and disease have strong immediate and long-lasting effects on the development of children. Illness and malnutrition divert much of the family resources and limit productivity of future generations, thus negatively affecting the wellbeing of the community.

<sup>3</sup> During Indonesian control, the government supplied farmers with agricultural inputs, bought their produce and organised transportation, installed and maintained irrigation systems.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF (2008) State of the World's Children Report.

## Project Overview

The project combines both health and food security components and aims to address malnutrition and disease, improve the prospects of economic growth and the wellbeing of the targeted communities.

The project is also in line with United Nations Millennium Development Goals and supports its fight against poverty and hunger. Three of the eight Millennium Development Goals are addressed by this project: eradicate poverty and hunger; improve child health; and improve maternal health.

**Project length: July 2009 - June 2013**

**The goal of the project is:**

- To improve food security of households in Aileu district, enabling them to raise well-nourished, healthy children.

**The projected outcomes are:**

- Increased household food availability and access through improved capacity for crop production, improved seed storage and income generation.
- Improved health services for children.
- Improved community knowledge and practices related to nutrition and health.

**Project activities supported by Best Western include:**

- Distribute 200 grams of Sele (corn) to 3,800 households.
- Provide training to 3,800 households on corn seed selection, based on total plant characteristics.
- Provide training to vulnerable households in the use of ashes, tephrosia leaves and other natural materials for preventing weevil damage in corn.
- Procure and distribute 55 manual corn grinding machines to vulnerable households.
- Provide training to 200 households on improving crop production through improving soil fertility and controlling soil erosion.

- Provide training and support to 3,500 households on conservation farming for corn-based cropping systems.
- Establish demplots for field staff and contact farmers to test gamal-corn mixed cropping, multiple cropping in rice fields, and test 3-5 new rice varieties.
- Establish two demplots in each community of Aileu Villa where rice is grown.
- Purchase 10 sets of hanging scales for field staff.
- Procure and distribute 10 metal corn shelling machines to vulnerable households.
- Distribute vegetable seeds to 600 vulnerable women.
- Procure and distribute 5kgs of Irish Potato to 50 households.
- Provide training to 4 community members in each community to construct and sell cement storage jars.
- Purchase and distribute materials to make 300 cement jars.

### Who will benefit?

The project is based in Aileu district, one of the 13 administrative districts of East Timor. Aileu has an area of 738km<sup>2</sup> and is located in a mountainous area, south of the capital Dili. The capital of the district, Aileu Villa, is 47km from Dili.

The 43 villages of the district have a population of 39,150 people or 7,745 households. Approximately 17,000 people will directly benefit from the project.



**Photo:** Children of Aileu district with a seed plot.

## Project sustainability

The project builds on the knowledge and insight gathered from food security and nutrition programs that World Vision has initiated in the targeted area since 2007.

The project staff work with the local government, church, NGOs, community groups, and the Area Development Committee to ensure the project is sustainable. The project is aware of the conflict-prone conditions and the prevailing culture of dependency in East Timor.

The project is based, however, on approaches that facilitate transition and sustainability. Thus, the project promotes sustainable agricultural systems by facilitating the uptake of well-proven, profitable, low-risk technologies by farmers.

The health component of the project aims to have a direct positive effect on the health of targeted communities by using a combination of preventative interventions and improving access to health care. This will lead to a decrease in health-related costs and an increase in the economic productivity of the community members, and long term sustainability.

## Evaluation methods

World Vision Australia will conduct annual project monitoring, including site visits and the facilitation of the end of project evaluation. Project progress and achievements are closely monitored by World Vision Australia. An annual report will be provided to project sponsors.

## Join Us

Join World Vision Australia and Best Western to help address major food insecurity and child malnutrition in East Timor. Your contribution is important and will go towards improving the lives of 17,000 people in the Aileu district, particularly children and women.

*Joaquim Dos Santos is a farmer from the village of Tatisame. Joaquim, his wife Domingas de Jesus, and their four children have benefited from the project.*

*Both Joaquim and Domingas received training in new conservation farming and sloping agriculture land techniques. Joaquim explained that his family had been using the same methods of farming for 20 years. Initially he had difficulty adapting to the 'new way'.*

*"At first I was worried to try a new way of farming," he said. "I thought maybe if I change the way I do things, the new seeds may not adapt, or that there would be more problems with pests and diseases...I felt a bit suspicious about it all."*

*But he was also interested to see first-hand how the new farming techniques would actually work, and he found the training easy. The resulting growth and benefits have convinced him that he has done the right thing to adopt and adapt.*

*"From just 200 grams of seed, by using the new seed and the new techniques, I have been able to grow 7 sacks of corn," Joaquim said. But the full impact of the 'new way' is yet to come. "I have saved seed from this new variety for next year so I can continue to have more corn next year."*



**Photo: Joaquim and his family with their new and improved corn variety.**

## Contact us

World Vision Australia  
Corporate and Donor Partnerships  
Tel: 1300 303 401  
Fax: 61 3 9287 2425  
[majorsupporterenquiries@worldvision.com.au](mailto:majorsupporterenquiries@worldvision.com.au) or  
your WVA representative